

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4-19, 21-26, 28-40 and 42-50 are pending in the application. Claims 7,8, 34 and 39 have been canceled. Claims 1, 9, 17-19, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 38, 40, 44, 45, 47, 48 and 50 have been amended. Support for the claim amendments may be found throughout the specification, including the claims as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

In particular, support for the amendment “crosslinked by a crosslinking agent comprising a metal cation” in claims 1, 29, 30, 35, 36, 38, 40, and 48 may be found on page 19, lines 30-32, page 20, lines 12-16, page 57, lines 1-4 and page 58, lines 18-29.

Support for the amendment to claim 9 may be found on page 20, lines 12-16, page 57, lines 2-4 and page 58, lines 18-29.

Support for amendments to claims 17-19 and 30 may be found on page 10, lines 14-17.

Support for amendments to claim 24 and 28 may be found on page 27, lines 8-32.

Support for the amendments to claims 32 may be found on page 7, lines 1-14.

Support for the amendment to claim 44 may be found on page 23, lines 5-20.

Support for the amendment to claim 45 may be found on page 24, lines 21-29 and page 58, lines 18-29.

Support for the amendments to claims 47 and 48 may be found on page 56, lines 28-30, page 57, lines 1-10, page 58, lines 18-31, page 59 and page 60, lines 1-7.

Support for the amendments to claim 50 may be found on page 57, lines 1-4, page 58, lines 18-31 and page 59 lines 1-9.

Amendment of claims should in no way be construed as an acquiescence to any of the Examiner’s rejections. The amendments to the claims are being made solely to expedite prosecution of the present application. Applicants reserve the right to further prosecute claims drawn to all subject matter disclosed in the instant patent application or in a continuation hereof.

The Examiner's remarks in the last Office Action are addressed below. It is believed that the amended claims and all dependent claims, taken in light of the remarks made herein, meet all criteria for patentability.